

6.3 DOCUMENT BASED EXERCISE

MUCKRAKERS

Task: Look at Documents 1, 2, and 3 and answer their accompanying questions. Then, use the documents and your knowledge of history to complete this writing assignment:

Write an essay about the muckrakers of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Be sure to identify the different muckrakers and to describe their goals and accomplishments. Include information about how they got their name.

Document 1:

The excerpt below is from journalist Ida Tarbell's History of the Standard Oil Company. What does Tarbell say is the goal of a trust?

Tarbell says that the goal of a trust is to gain entire control of commodity and to do so perfectly and although not always the best thing, it does tend to work out fairly well in most cases.

"Standard Oil Trust is the most perfectly developed trust in existence; that is, it satisfies most nearly the trust ideal of entire control of the commodity in which it deals. Its vast profits have led its officers into various allied interests, such as railroads, shipping, gas, copper, iron, steel, as well as into banks and trust companies.... It has led in the struggle against legislation directed against combinations. Its power in state and Federal government, in the press, in the college, in the pulpit, is generally recognized."

Document 2:

In How the Other Half Lives, Jacob Riis called attention to the misery of tenement living. What aspect of tenement living is Riis describing in this excerpt?

Riis is describing the department aspect of tenement living. Many people and many families are getting crammed in little apartment buildings and residential houses.

"It is said that nowhere in the world are so many people crowded together on a square mile as here.... In this house... there were fifty-eight babies and thirty-eight children that were over five years of age. In Essex Street, two small rooms in a six-story tenement were made to hold a "family" of father and mother, twelve children, and six boarders. These are samples of the packing of the population that has run up the record here to the rate of three hundred and thirty thousand per square mile.

The densest crowding of Old London... never got beyond a hundred and seventy-five thousand. Even the alley is crowded out. Through dark hallways and filthy cellars, crowded, as is every foot of the street, with dirty children, the settlements in the rear are reached."

Document 3:

In *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair exposes the atrocities of the meat-packing industry. In the excerpt below, what aspect of industry is the focus?

The aspect of industry in focus for this particular excerpt is the pain and suffering that workers go through in textile industries and meat industries. The risks there are to perform simple tasks are unbearably cruel and pain-staking.

"There were the wool-pluckers, whose hands went to pieces even sooner than the hands of the pickle men; for the pelts of the sheep had to be painted with acid to loosen the wool, and then the pluckers had to pull out this wool with their bare hands, till the acid had eaten their fingers off. There

were those who made the tins for the canned meat; and their hands, too, were a maze of cuts, and each cut represented a chance for blood poisoning. Some worked at the stamping machines, and it was very seldom that one could work long there at the pace that was set, and not give out and forget himself and have a part of his hand chopped off. There were the "hoisters," as they were called, whose task it was to press the lever which lifted the dead cattle off the floor. They ran along upon a rafter, peering down through the damp and the steam; and as old Durham's architects had not built the killing room for the convenience of the hoisters, at every few feet they would have to stoop under a beam, say four feet above the one they ran on; which got them into the habit of stooping, so that in a few years they would be walking like chimpanzees."

Write your essay here. Remember, all essays need to have a thesis, supporting statements/ paragraphs, and a conclusion.

A lot was in progress throughout the late 1800's and early 1900's, which gave the muckrakers, or crusading journalists a lot of fresh, new, and exciting material to write about. Even though there were many muckrakers and they all had much to accomplish, there was plenty of interesting material to publicize.

Muckraker was a term that was gained by the crusading journalists and given by Theodore Roosevelt after observing that the journalists are basically dishing the dirt on everyone and everything. They are always looking for the biggest events and will rake it out of anybody. Some of the more famous muckrakers include Ida Tarbell, John D. Rockefeller, and Upton Sinclair. Ida Tarbell was one of the lead muckrakers and was focused on the standard oil companies and their use of trusts, she wasn't fond of trusts and what companies were doing in respect to the trusts. She wanted to eliminate the trusts or at least find a way to minimize the power given to the trusts so they would no longer completely control the companies. John D. Rockefeller was America's first billionaire thanks to his position as owner for the Standard Oil company. He is also a well known muckraker. Upton Sinclair, my personal favorite muckraker was responsible for the publishing of the novel The Jungle, describes in detail about the horrible positions factory workers were forced to deal with. He wanted to make everyone aware of the danger they faced everyday going to work and the conditions of the packaging and meat processors. For example, the meat would have so much rat dung on it that any day, a worker could swipe piles of the meat with his hands. More people got open insights about the issues that went on in factories. eventually, Theodore Roosevelt passed a bill, The Pure Food and Drug Act that said that the ingredients of a food or drug must be placed on the back of the product or somewhere so people know what they are consuming.

Muckrakers were swamped with news stories and gossip during the late 1800's and early 1900's with trusts, oil companies, and more understanding of the factory conditions. This led to many goals and accomplishments that proved major for our country and provided some of the rules and laws we have today.